

# **A POST-COLD WAR NUCLEAR STRATEGY MODEL**

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## FOREWORD

We are pleased to publish this twentieth volume in the *Occasional Paper* series of the US Air Force Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). This monograph represents the results of research conducted during fiscal year 1997 under the sponsorship of a grant from INSS. It is an important work, addressing nuclear strategy at a time when those weapons and concepts on their use are undergoing significant review. It presents a summary and critique of major recent proposals regarding United States nuclear forces and strategy, raising significant questions that these proposals have failed to fully address. The paper also addresses issues revolving around Russian nuclear weapons and strategy, asking the same questions about the holder of the world's other major nuclear arsenal. Finally, based on this analysis, the paper proposes a basic framework for the United States to follow in developing its post-Cold War nuclear strategy and posture.

The authors are experienced analysts and observers of United States nuclear and national security issues and policy, and I am pleased to say that they are also colleagues of mine on the USAFA faculty. I have co-taught courses with each of them, and I have come to respect their insights. Thus, it is with personal pleasure that I convey this, the first INSS Occasional Paper issued under my tenure as Director, to you, the reader. INSS is pleased to offer Hall, Cappello, and Lambert's insight for public debate in this important area.

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JAMES M. SMITH  
Director



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The authors of this paper hold the view that the conceptualization of nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War environment will require some elements of the old Cold War debate, and some new concerns resulting from events in the 1990s. The first relevant debate will pertain to the classic Cold War arguments about deterrence, and its utility. It is clear that the second part of this conceptualization, and clearly related to the need for deterrence, will be the need to monitor and evaluate the current military, economic, and political situation in Russia. Third, after discussions in these two areas there needs to be a careful consideration of the recent proposals for changing the alert status of the U.S. strategic nuclear arsenal. And finally, since U.S. nuclear strategy and posture will reflect certain domestic and political realities, it would be helpful to consider which ones have merit in this question.

With regards to these areas, the authors examined the old and the current debates in open published sources in the United States and in Russia, and interviewed a number of practitioners and scholars in both places. Having done this, the authors believe that at least five assumptions and their associated recommendations will drive U.S. nuclear strategy in the post-Cold War period:

- Nuclear deterrence, as an operating concept, is not in danger in the near- or long-term.
- Nuclear deterrence will not require the same numbers of weapons, mix of weapons, or alert status of weapons as it did during the past fifty years.
- The focus should turn to non-strategic nuclear weapons in an attempt to increase crisis stability, and reduce the possibility of “loose nukes.”
- If strategic numbers decline dramatically and tactical nuclear weapons are virtually eliminated, then nuclear defenses become more defensible to those who were once opposed to them.

- General Andrew Goodpaster's summation of the political and economic realities, and thus, what the U.S. should do seems to be the likely course of action regarding nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War era.

One question that emerges as a dominant one in the debate about the future of nuclear weapons (the number of them and their posture), and is often overlooked when discussing weapons systems, is the broader nature of the overall global environment. More specifically, this has to do with the existing relationship between the states in this environment and what this relationship means when designing a national security strategy. The authors assert that significant changes in these relationships in the post-Cold War era are the predecessor to significant changes in military postures, particularly regarding nuclear weaponry. Thus, a post-Cold War nuclear strategy that is fundamentally different from that found in the Cold War period would require a post-Cold War set of state relationships, and this has not yet occurred.